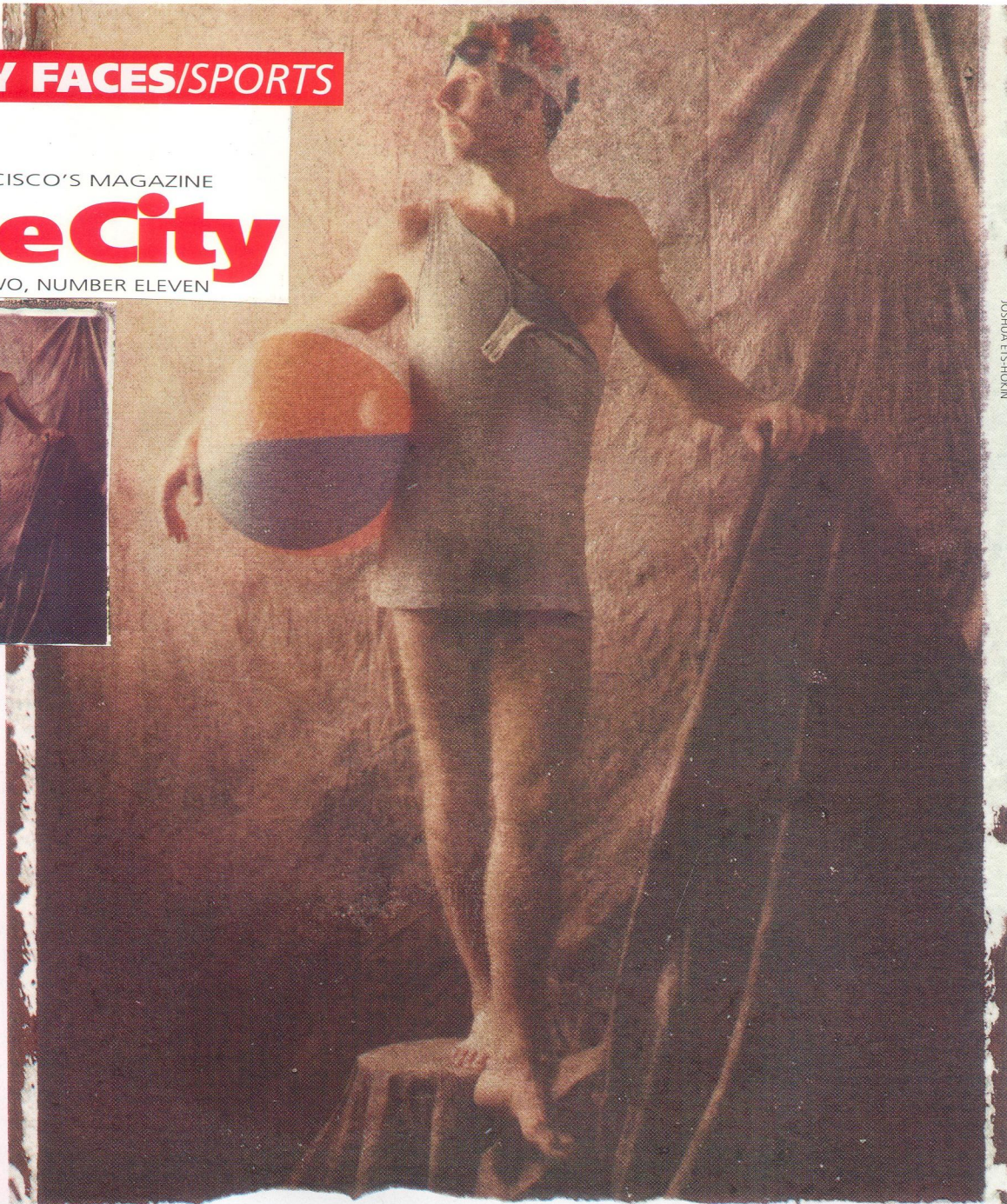
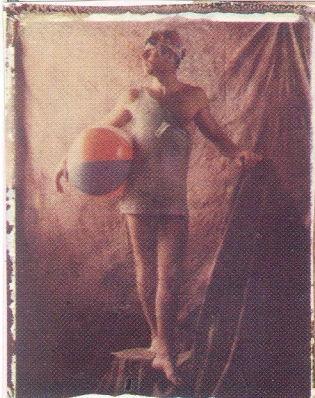


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JOSHUA ETS-HOKIN

King of the Sea

Liam Hennessy swims with Dolphins

by E. Andrew Russell

"REMEMBER DOING A TEST SWIM FOR MY FIRST NEW Year's swim, and seeing a Princess Cruise Liner coming at me," says Liam Hennessy, the 1991 winner of the race from Alcatraz to the Dolphin Club at Aquatic Park. "I didn't know what to do. I could dive or sprint, but I didn't know how far to go either way. Those things are huge!"

Hennessy is a strapping 28-year-old with a passion for open water swimming. "I've been swimming since I was 11," he says, and speaks of a time when he swam from the Berkeley mud flats to The City. "Someone asked me to do it, so I did. I like it because it has no boundaries, you're just so free out there."

When he isn't swimming, Hennessy works as a student-teacher in Richmond's school district pursuing a teaching cre-

dential. "I have always wanted to be an elementary school teacher and work with inner-city kids," Hennessy says. "I love the diverse backgrounds and ethnicity of the kids. Besides, no one wants to work in the city, and there's a real need for positive role models, especially male role models."

Trying to downplay the competition aspect of his swimming, Hennessy says, "I work out at the most for an hour a day...mostly for mental therapy. And the club is great. It's really rustic, you don't win any trophies, cars, or money. Okay, you maybe get your name on a plaque, but we do it because we love to swim."

Though he prefers to talk about his family or the Dolphin Club rather than himself, when pressed about winning the club's New Year's swim, Hennessy's passion comes through: "My favorite swims have to be the Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day swims. I can't think of a better way of expressing how grateful I am to the higher being than to be able to swim in the bay."